



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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F.W.S. BEGINS ANNUAL WATERFOWL BREEDING GROUND STUDIES

The annual survey of the breeding grounds of North America's migratory waterfowl is now under way, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. The survey is made each year to supplement the winter inventory as the basis for the Federal migratory waterfowl hunting regulations.

In conducting its study of the principal breeding grounds in Canada, Alaska and the northern United States, the Service determines the availability and distribution of water areas, trends in the size of bird populations, and the success of the nesting and rearing periods.

Biologists participating in the waterfowl breeding ground survey also band as large a sample of birds on as many areas as possible. The banding work is done to outline species flyways, determine time-distribution of the birds, and to obtain indices to shooting pressures and population survivals.

Because it is physically impossible to make a complete coverage of the continent's vast breeding grounds, the Service and its cooperators look for population trends in surveying sample areas. The same sample areas are covered each year at about the same time and by the same method.

Dominion and Provincial wildlife conservation personnel are cooperating with the Service in Canada -- as members of aerial crews doing census work by the transect method, and as members of ground parties which inspect breeding habitat, make brood counts and record nesting data. Similar cooperation is being provided by state conservation agencies in the United States. Ducks Unlimited studies in Canada will also supply important information to the Service.

Aerial surveys of the waterfowl breeding grounds started May 1. Preliminary reports received by the Service from the southern parts of Canada's Prairie Provinces indicate a very dry breeding season. Biologists there have encountered dust storms and reduced water areas. The drought conditions extend south into North Dakota and South Dakota.

Service biologists believe that many birds will be forced on to more permanent water areas or further northward into second-rate breeding habitat. They are fairly satisfied with the volume of the birds' return to the breeding grounds, but report that it is still too early in the season to definitely predict the year's breeding success.

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